

A Yarn from Jim Bennet

BY J. C. PLUMMER.

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"I don't often tell this here yarn," said Jim, "for the reason that I don't like being thought a liar. If a man calls me one I know what to do, but when he thinks I'm one I can't have a reason for pluggin' 'im. Now, in telling this here yarn I've no cause to lie for I don't figger very big in it and besides if anyone of you ever meet Paul Stowman he'll tell the same yarn; for why? Because he was on the bark, too. But here's the yarn: The Phoebe Clement was bound, in ballast, from Boston to Savannah where she would load lumber for the La Plata. When we made our last quint at Cape Cod the wind was fair nor-west and it kept in that quarter until we were off Long Island then it came out strong from the nor-east.

It kept gettin' wuss all the way down and just as we had got past the Virginia capes it fairly split itself. Capt. Snow made a big mistake in not puttin' into Hampton Roads when he'd a chance and I guess he knew it, too, but it was too late. Work as we did, and a man works spy when he's tryin' to live a little longer, we found the wind and the drift was surely pushin' us on them bloody Diamond Shoals.

Capt. Snow was a good navigator and he handled that bark under close reefed tops'ls as well as any man could, but he had a most onreasonable craft in the Phoebe Clement. She never wanted to do anything that was asked of her and then when a man has a square rigger on to a lee shore he has a job on his hands to get her off. When it comes to coastwise tradin' give me a fore and after.

The skipper had brought his little son with him on this voyage. He was a taut little kid and all of us were fond of him. The captain had lost his wife and this little boy was the apple of his eye.

When I heard the skipper mutter, "poor little fellow, only ten years old," then I knew he was thinkin' of the little boy down in the cabin and that he'd given up hope.

It was just at dusk and things were desprit with us when I saw a great green wave rolling down on us from win'ard. I shouts a warnin' and jumps into the fore rigging. The men in the waist saved themselves by grabbin' whatever'd hold 'em fast, but the man at the wheel went over the rail as the bark heeled down the shock of that mighty wave. The skipper was clingin' to the backstay but when he saw the men at the wheel go over he sprang for the spokes. Somehow he missed his hold and in a minute he was banged against the cabin house and swept over it into the sea.

I had given up all hope and expected to go plumb down with the bark, but she commenced to right slowly. Her fore and main top-masts had snapped like pipestems and that eased her although the spars were a slamin' against her side. Stowman ran to the wheel and we slid down from the rigging and began cutting and slashing at the mess of tangle of ropes which held the spars to the vessel's side.

"Where's the skipper?" whispered the mate, to me.

"He's gone overboard," I replied, in a low voice.

I wonder why it is that a man always speaks low when he's in danger of death. I suppose he's saving of his voice for excuses to God A'mighty about the kind o' life he's led.

We were in an awful shape. There wasn't enough of the lee rail left to make a decent fire and both boats were smashed to pieces.

"What in God's name are we goin' to do?" muttered the mate.

"Why rig a storm sail in the main," sung out Stowman; "for God's sake do something to try save our lives."

The mate gave the order. "It's no good," he muttered, "the drift and the wind are too much for us."

We bent the sail but it did no good; we were steadily going on the shoals.

Stowman had left the wheel and I had taken his place. The mate, scared to death, was crouching in the lee of the cabin house and the others were forrard. It was quite dark and I was jest holdin' on to the spokes of the wheel, for I felt there was blamed little use in tryin' to steer in face of the certain death afore us, when someone pulled me one side and took the wheel.

Dark as it was I recognized the skipper.

"I thought you were drowned," I gasped.

He didn't answer but commenced to put the wheel to starboard.

"My God, skipper," I cried, "you're puttin' her ashore. This isn't a fore and after."

Queer way to talk to a skipper, wasn't it? but when I was half crazy with fear of going on them bloody shoals in the night.

He never said a word.

I noticed that he was steering with his left hand and that the bark was answering to the helm for the first time since she had gotten in the drift. Stowman came aft.

"Who's that at the wheel?" he asked me.

"Cap'n Snow," I answered, "and he's steerin' plumb ashore."

"Then he wasn't washed over?" said Stowman.

"I saw him go over the rail," said I, staring at the figure at the wheel.

With the helm hard as a starboard the bark went straight for the breakers and I held my breath waitin' for her to strike.

Then the skipper shot the spokes to port and the wind lulled. It came again in about three minutes and dead from nor-west.

The skipper waved his hand to



"Who's That at the Wheel?" He Asked Me.

wards the masts but said not a word. I understood him and ran forrard. The others were sailors, all, and they had already begun to bend a sail to the stump of the fore-mast so as to help the old hooker out of the pickle she was in.

The sail filled and the vessel slowly wore away from the westland.

"We'll go clear," exclaimed Stowman, clutching my arm.

"We'll go clear," I said after him, and cold as it was, for it was the last part of November, I wiped the sweat from my forehead.

Suddenly the bark lost the wind and I ran aft. No one stood at the wheel.

"Skipper," I called, and I began to turn cold.

I grabbed the wheel and brought the bark to the wind all the time looking around for the skipper. I cried out for Stowman and when he came aft I asked him to take the wheel and went down into the cabin. The mate was there taking a dram of spirits.

"Did the skipper come down?" I asked.

"Why, the skipper's drowned," he said.

I opened the captain's stateroom and there that little kid was sound asleep jest as calm as if he had a been in his crib ashore.

Now, boys, you heard me say the skipper was a steerin' with his left hand and when his body was washed ashore they found his right arm broken.

"Who vas it at der veel?" asked Hans.

"It was the skipper's spirit come to save his little boy," replied Jim.

"What came of the kid?" asked I.

"Oh, when we came into Wilmington in tow of a steamer they telegraphed up north and his grandfather came down for him. The way he cuddled that kid made it plain he'd have a good berth in the old man's home."

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"All right," said Jones, and, mindful of his promise, he stepped into the grocery.

"Hello," said Jenks, the grocer. "Don't often see you. What can I do for you to-day?"

"How much are your best eggs?" asked Jones.

"Well," said Jenks, "two more than I am now selling for 24 cents would make them two cents a dozen less than they are now."

"All right," said Jones. Send twenty-four cents' worth over to the house right away. My wife is waiting for them."

How many eggs did he buy? After he reached the office he started to figure it out; and before he got through he was nearly crazy. He then gave the problem to his book-keepers who also came to grief over it.

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Barnes Items.

Barnes, Ky., Jan. 18.—The farmers are about out of anything to do. The fields are so muddy they can't get into them to cut sprouts or gather up the cornstalks to get the land ready for plowing.

The first service for the new year was held at the Christian church on Sunday, the 13th. Rev. H. C. Ford filled the pulpit.

Mr. Charley Carter was the guest of Mr. E. M. Barnes' family last week.

Miss Rosa King's school at Shiloh, near Pilot Rock, closed last Friday. Miss King is an accomplished young lady and a fine teacher.

Miss Marietta Merritt's school at Dogwood closed last week. Miss Merritt belongs in Hopkinsville. She is beloved by all her pupils and acquaintances and proved herself highly competent as a teacher.

Mr. Bell Warner has completed his new metal roof cottage. He has moved his family into it and they are delighted with their new home.

Mr. Monroe Crabtree, of near here, has nearly completed his new house, and moved into it, and will soon put on the finishing touches.

Mr. J. B. West, who is postmaster here and our merchant also, is doing well in serving the people in both capacities.

It has rained almost every day for a month and in consequence tobacco has been soft and in good order for shipping. The tobacco growers have about gotten through with stripping, but the Greenville road is so muddy that the crops cannot be delivered at Hopkinsville at this time. Our road is in very bad shape. We have as good as no pike, and it has been overlooked by the fiscal court.

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